

MARVEL

1

SPURRIER

QUINN

SILVA

THE DEATH OF
DOCTOR
STRANGE

X-MEN

BLACK KNIGHT





All right--
the scrying's
working. I'm seeing
things just by thinking
about them. Here's
what we know
so far:

Couple days
back, the X-Men
were in London--
doing what
they do.

It's, uh--it's
actually pretty
inspiring, seeing
how close they
work together.



Anyway. Bad
guys beaten, crowd
goes wild, perfect hair,
perfect smiles, etc.
And then?

Well, that's
when the sky
fell down.



Wait...
This is
weird...

I think the
vision's trying
to show me what
caused it. But--
it's not in London.
It's...New York,
I think?

Looks
like...





Of course I bloody heard. Your magic chair's zapping your voice right into my brain. It's very annoying, Dane.

Hey--we talked about this. No names. I'm "Siege," you're "Sword." Then we can swap, see? That's way cooler th--

Bollocks.

I've been Jackie Chopra my whole life--still am. You only wanted codenames 'cause I won't call you "dad."



Look, I'm sorry your mate died. But you used some of the most powerful magic artifacts ever to make that bloody throne--

--it's called the Ebon Siege--

--and the whole point of us both being the Black Knight is to share the burden of all these cursed treasures.



E.g., I'm out here with the Ebon Blade, on my first proper mission--

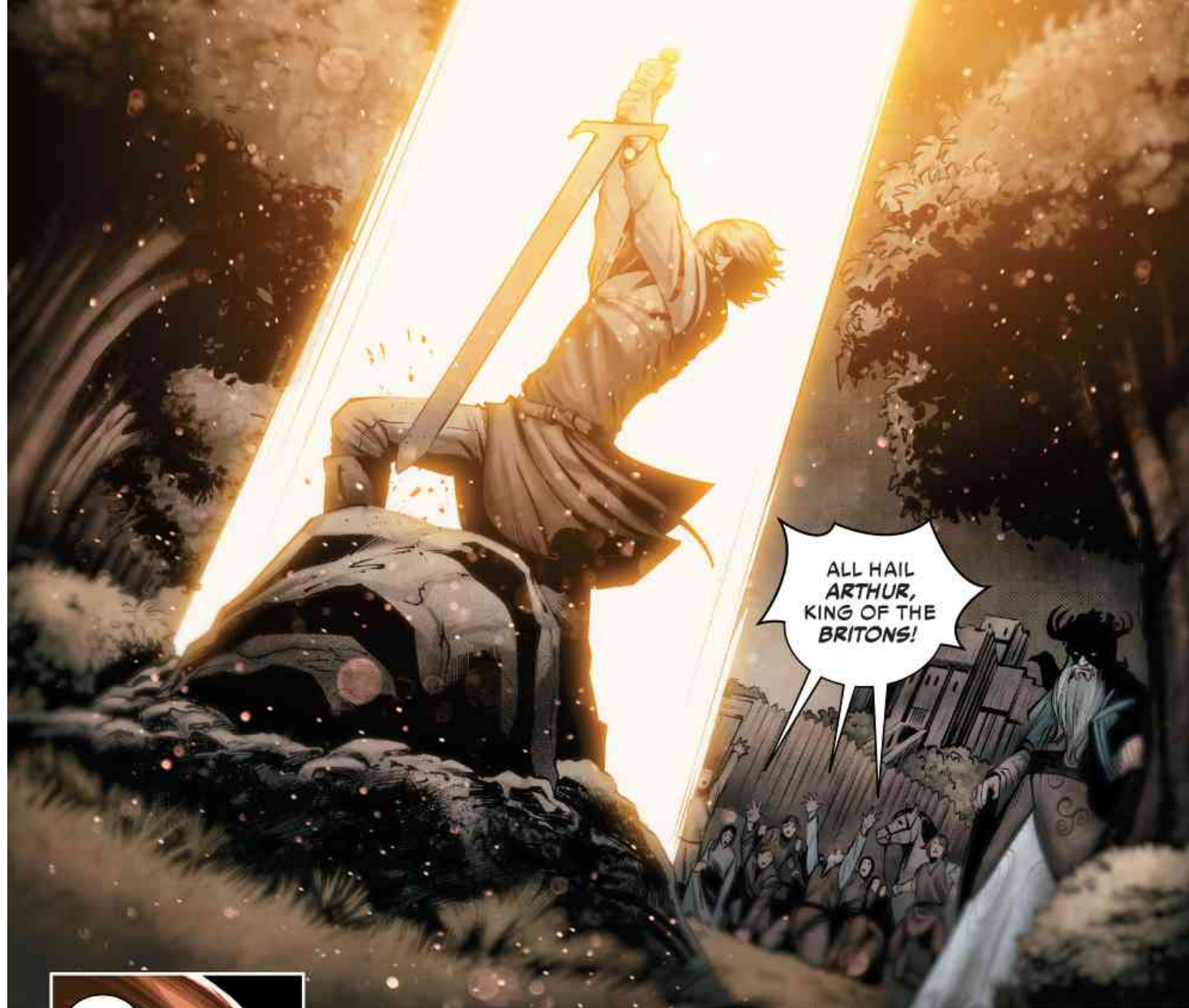
--I still don't think you're ready--

--but instead of using your miraculous astral armchair to get some helpful intel, you're bugging me about bloody codenames.

Okay, okay, just--don't do anything. Hold position until I know more.

I think... NFF? I think something's coming through here. Looks like...uh...







I have consulted the *runes*, sire. The *heavenly shadow* above us--it is a *world*. A *demon* world.

Being drawn toward thy fair kingdom as a *lodestone* draws *iron*.

I-i-is it my fault, Merlin? It happened when I drew *Excalibur*!

I do not *know*, sire. That blade was forged in *unearthly light* in forgotten aeons. I have consulted every augur--*all* agree!

Excalibur is a weapon to *constrain* the darkness, not attract it!



It's getting *closer*, Merlin. *Darker*.

Aye. I believe it is a *splinter*, my liege. A *dead castaway* of the faerie realms.

Denied berth in *Otherworld*, it seeks to pour its poison into the mortal realm. I fear it will arrive within the hour...

It has a name, my lord.



"The *Hungry Land*..."

Y-you hear that, Jacks? That's what we're *dealing* with here.





That's
what ate
London two
days ago.

The
Hungry
Land...



Hrrmf.

Let the
record show I've
been an *X-Fanatic*
club member since I
was nine. *Nothing*
eats the X-Men
and survives.

I'm
going
in.

The mutant nation of Krakoa is a refuge for its people, but the time recently came for a newly elected group of heroes to protect the rest of the Earth. They are the...



Cyclops



Jean Grey



Sunfire



Synch



Polaris



Wolverine



Rogue

Together, Dane Whitman and his daughter Jackie "Jacks" Chopra share the curse of the Ebony Blade as the...

BLACK KNIGHT

Dane

Jacks

Previously...

Doctor Stephen Strange was Earth's Sorcerer Supreme, a title granted to one whose skills in the mystic arts are greater than any other being. And with that came the responsibility to preserve a magic barrier around the Earth that warded off other dimensional threats.

But Doctor Strange has been mysteriously murdered, the barrier has fallen and the entire world is under attack!

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Wait--Jacks, hold up. Real talk. This father-daughter thing--it's new, I get it. There are trust issues. That's on me.

But...

...There's *cachet* in the BK brand, y'know? I just...I need to know you're working with me here.

By which you mean, "follow my orders, sidekick."

What? No! We're partners! Two people, one hero, right? It's just... The *Ebony Blade's* dangerous. You spend too long with a magic object, you start to...kinda... become it.

All it's doing right now is *pulling*. I think it knows where to go.

Whoa. Are you seeing this?

Listen, Dane, instead of telepathic nagging, maybe you could use your all-powerful *cosmic furniture* and find a way to fix *demonic London*?

Surely that's not too compl--



--ex.



Th...th...
that's the
X-Men...



...They did
not look like
that in the
swimwear
special...

Get down!
Don't let
them see
you!



Who... who're--?

Dane!
Thank god you're here! Stay low! They drain people. Enslave them!

Oh, wow, Jacks, this is fantastic! That's Faiza Hussain!

I thought I was the only one immune to this place, but-- you're still you too. It's the swords. It must be.

Faiza Hussain? You're... wait, you're the one who wields--



Excalibur. Obviously.

Dane, what's wrong with you? Why's your voice weird?

Tell her it's the new helmet! Tell her I'm sorry I never replied to her texts!



I, uh. I have a cold. And I think a British accent suits the Knightly idiom better.

It really does.

Oh, crap. I think the big one's seen us.

All right, Dane--let's show them what we can do. You want to call the shots or shall I?



Jacks, Faiza's a pro. Do exactly what she tells you and you'll be A-okay. Teamwork!



Jacks?

It's that. This is my bloody quest.



No, wait, go back--you're not safe without hel--
EAAAAAGHHHHH
--no, no more visions, not now, not n--



The Hungry Land. I have divined its ways, sire.

A dead realm. It consumes other realities. Remakes them.



Within its borders, mortal souls are sustenance.

Subjugation of the powerless clads the mighty in unholy armor. A feudalism of ghosts...

Dane!
Whose voice is this?! Get it out of my head!



It's--it's Merlin. He...he figured out who rules the Hungry Land. Damn.

Listen, Jacks-- I know you wanted to save the X-Men-- a-and, hey, that's a big swing--but... they're not just enslaved.

Their whole reality's been changed. Their whole backstory. They're demons, Jacks. Servants to a King of Death...

of the Hungry Court,

legates to the dead crown, observations are herewith recorded.



The Countess has her favorites, of course. Unholy satraps, content to scabble for the scraps of her table. Foremost stands the **Cockatrice Knight**, he of the baleful eye and bleeding pride, and the **Iron Priestess**, whose blighted hymns are offered to lodestone and laceration.

The Crimson Countess is the first of the Festal Order. The petty rabble is her banquet. Upon her unholy skill, the realm has sharpened its ravening. Hers is the dominion of the mind, and therewith she feasts from afar.



In the Hungry Land, domination takes many forms. One great captain there is whose appetite burns with such ardor it has ignited like a blighted star. **The High Lord Lambert**, his rank and name, brightest and boldest of the King's creatures.



And oh, then, the greatest of the feasting lords--most dreadful of the King's paladins: the **Twins Ravenous**. Theirs is the gift of absorption. No mere meal for them, but alteration, adaptation. They become all that they consume, and in a realm such as this--? Each has grown gigantic. Indomitable. And quite perfectly maddened by the moans of their own flesh.



Another there is the **Razorwolf**, grim beast of the blade, who thrills much to the chase and the kill, and insists therefore that sustenance be taken only in hunt and combat. Though her thralls be thus few in number, theirs is the sweetest soulflesh.



Theirs is the final duty. Theirs, the honor of defending the bleak heart of the Kingdom. Theirs the pride and power of basking in the unquenchable hunger of the **Netherking**, from whose empty avarice all glories obtain. Fear him! And tremble now, oh morsel, to learn his true name, for he



What
the chronic
#@%&#@
is--?

It's
Necromon.

The hungry
shade of a
dead god.

L-look,
I'm not saying
you're not capable.
But...his world, his
rules. There's no
shame in admitting
you're outta your
depth.

Please,
just--trust
me. Head back
toward Faiza
and--

I have a
flying #@%&#@
horse and a
magic #@%&#@
sword! Will you
please just let
me do this
my way?!



BOOOORR

NEEEINGGHHH--



Hm. The **stead** is pitiful...but the warrior **resists**.

Nnnnff!

There is **another** will at work here, my knights. An **ancient** stain, dark as sin, entangled with that one's **life**...

It **defies** the ravening...

It's that **sword**! **Take it!** Destroy what you cannot devour! For the **King!**

N-no...



AA-
AAAGHH!

Back!

FSLSSK



What on Earth is wrong with you?! Why did you run off like that?

How-- how did--?



Bio-molecular manipulation. Not very permanent, sadly, when Wolverine's healing factor is involved...

My horse. She zombified my bloody horse...

Dane, what's going on? You act like you don't know me. I thought we were-- close.



L-look, thanks for the save, but-- I'm fine. I'm going to kill that giant. Alone.

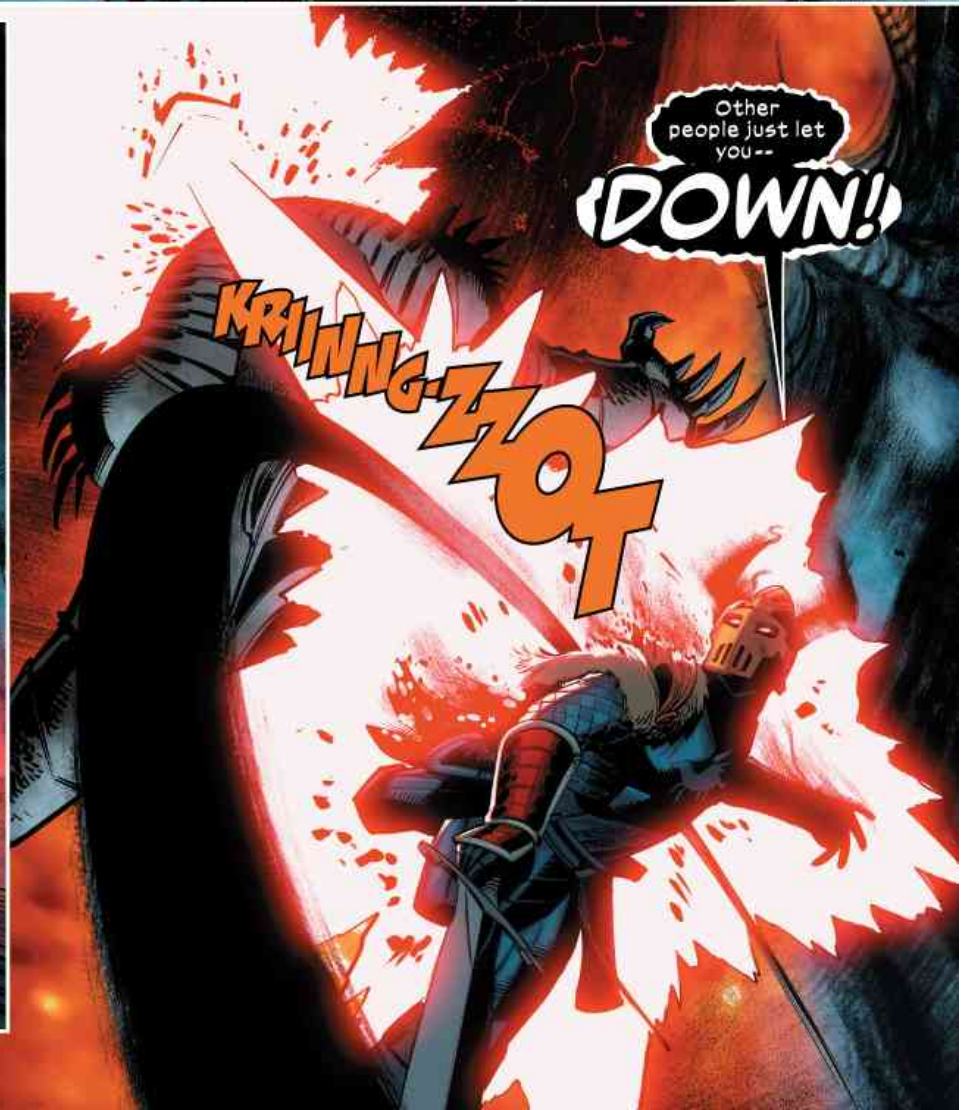
Why?! You've got nothing to prove, Jacks! It's just the sword! It's amping up your negativity! That's how it feeds!

It's turning you into it!



BOORP

Nnnrrrr--AAA! Stop nagging me! I don't need anyone!



Other people just let you--

DOWN!

KRRING-ZOT

Nice deflection.

Here's me letting you down by healing your shoulder, oh mysteriously dusky-skinned cockney version of Dane Whitman.

I also bowl a mean leg-spinner and can spot a *faker* at one hundred yards.

I'm f-fine. The pain's good.

"The pain's g--"? Merciful Allah, I thought *Dane* was dark.

Look, get behind me! I'm sort of *invincible*, abstractly speaking.

Who *are* you?

Jacks. I'm his daughter. The one he only just bothered to contact.

Ah. That tracks.

That's not fair! I didn't even know you existed!

Oh f---, *Jacks*, watch out, it's *Polaris*, she's--

Mine!

NO--! L-let go!

CLONK



Aaah!



...What was that?

Who cares? It worked.



Uh-oh. That's *Rogue* and *Synch* up there...

I know who they are!

Listen, Ms. Jacks-- when you wield a magic weapon you... you start to--

--to become it, I **KNOW!**

Right, exactly, so-- if they catch us--they'll--

I KNOW! They'll copy our swords' powers! Stop telling me what I know!

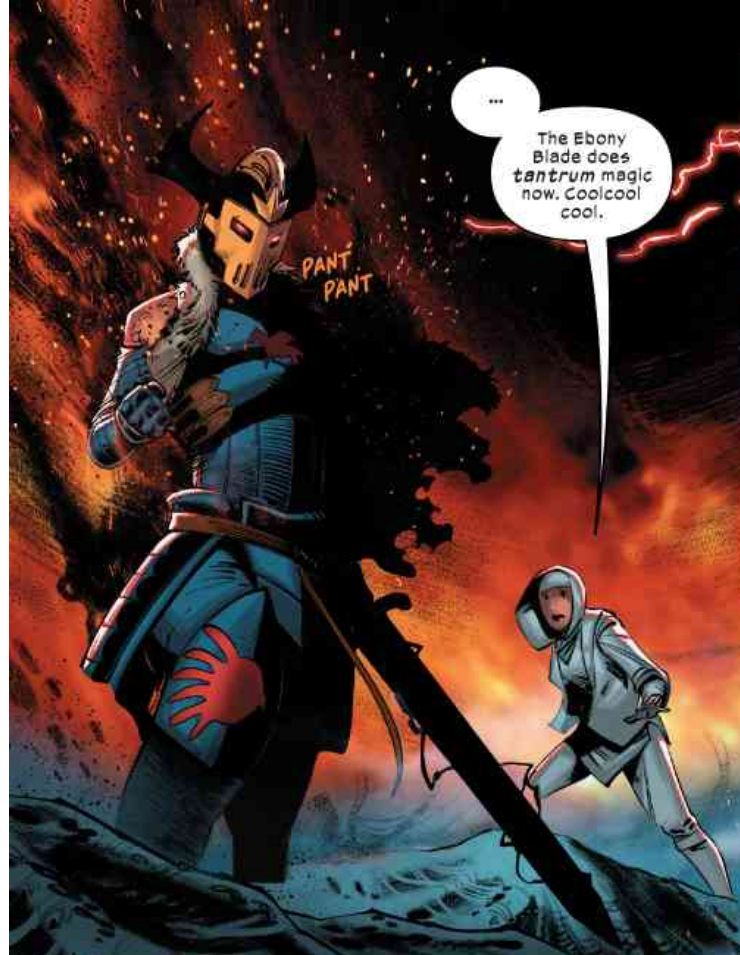


I'm sensing some *serious* anger issues here, young lady, and that is *not* a healthy attitude for a hero to--

You're wrong. It's *better* than healthy.



It feeds the blade.



...
The Ebony Blade does *tantrum* magic now. Coolcool cool.



Hhh. Listen, Jacks, I know Dane can seem kind of a *disaster*--and I wish he'd *shave* once in a while--

--but he really *does* know his *heroing*. If *he* were here he'd be telling you--



Listen to her! She's *smart*! How many times have I told you I only *seem* like a disaster?! See? *See?*!



--nobody ever solved *anything* getting *pissed off* all on their own. Sometimes you just have to-- *trust* people.

Everyone...I ever trusted...let... me...*down*...



I'M! BETTER! ALONE--







Jacks?
Jacks are you
okaaaaaNOT
**AGAINNIIIGIMME
ABREAK--**



Oh, my liege...
what a **fool** I
have been...

I thought
the **blade** the true
power. I thought
Excalibur a treasure
to herald an **epoch** of
valor and **justice**--
and this **boulder**
merely its prison.



I was
wrong.

The story
lay not in the
sword...but in
the **stone**.

KRISSSHHH



The **demon**
worlds of woe
and wickedness--
they surround us like
warships 'pon a
sunless sea.

The black
stone...oh, this
cosmic evil...it is
the **tide** that carries
them to shore. A
siren song of
horror.

So long as bright
Excalibur pierced it,
neutralizing its pull,
the tide drew away. The
dark domains were
repulsed.

But when
drawn...?

...Merlin.
Oh, you
stubborn
ass...

Arthur
begged him
to put **Excalibur**
back, but--that
didn't fit his
perfect
myth.

He took
a **different**
tack.





My *magnum opus*. A barrier around our world. A great *working* to *thicken* the branes of *wyrd* and *warp*.

A *legacy* for the *magi* of this world. A *duty*--passed from one *Sorcerer Supreme* to the next--to hold these *demon spheres* at bay.

A sword arm may *weary*, a stone may *shatter*--but *human unity*? *Cooperation* and *concord*? That is the *chain* that cannot be broken--

--providing only that *none is left to stand alone*.



That's why this is happening. Doc Strange *died* and-- nobody was *there*. Nobody to maintain the barrier *spell*...

All because Merlin wanted to keep a glowy sword instead of putting it back? #@%&##!

N-no, it... it wasn't just Excalibur... He...Oh...



The *Starstone*... Let *evil* contend with *evil*. Let us set a *shadow* to defend the *light*...

Jacks, he-- oh damn!--he used the boulder. Broke it down. Reforged it!



The boulder is the Starstone! It's what he used to make the Ebony Items!

Magnet for evil. Well, that explains a lot.

I don't understand! Wh-why can't I hurt this thing? Excalibur has the power to slay anything!



His realm, his rules. You can't kill what's already dead.

I'm sorry, Jacks. We can't beat Necromon, can't fix the barrier spell, can't even save the X-Men.

I guess the cosmic furniture didn't help after all.



Actually, it...sort of did.

"The chain that cannot be broken... providing only that none is left to stand alone."



Faiza! Rogue and Synch--they'll copy our powers if they catch us, right?

...So?







Wh-why
do ah feel like
mah *mind's* made
of *shadows*?



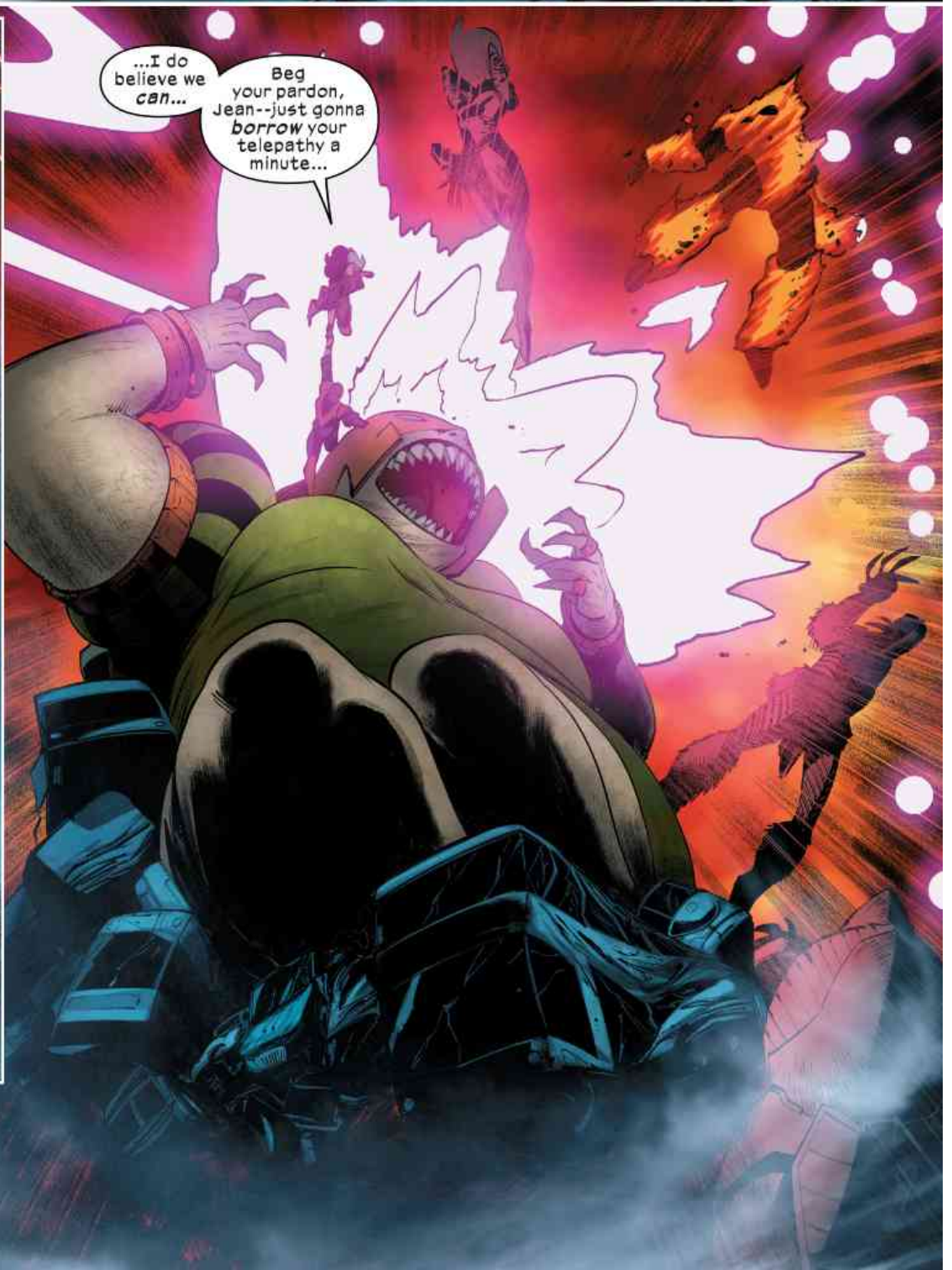
The magic
of our *swords*
made us impervious
to all this. You just
replicated our
immunity.

You're
welcome.

Rogue,
Synch? Can you,
I don't know...
can you spread it
'round? Like...
free your
friends?



Why,
shughah...



...I do
believe we
can...

Beg
your pardon,
Jean--just gonna
borrow your
telepathy a
minute...





Don't you dare tell me to quit, Dane.

Actually, I was...I was gonna say **I'm sorry**. For, y'know. **Micromanaging**.

Look--I want you to love being the **Black Knight** as much as I do, and...I guess...



...you're not the **only one** with trust issues.



...
Dane.

I don't know what to do.

Help.



Well, I... I do have one idea, but... it's...pretty horrible.



All, uh. All you've gotta do is wait until Faiza's about to make a big, y'know, heroic attack with Excalibur, then...uh...



Trust me.



What did you do?!

It wasn't me! She jumped in front!

M...m...
mkhh...
m-molecular
c-c-c-control...

Right, right, I can fix this, easy, it's--

Polaris-- get that sword out of her!

N-no...



Th-the sword stays.



uh. Okaaaay...
I'm...I'm diverting
arteries, cauterizing
the edges,
rethreading the
nerves...

We should focus on the demon. Whitman's always been eccentric, but-- this?

That's not Dane Whitman. Sunfire.



NnF.

You--you saw what happened when the swords touched. That pulse of light.

Put them together and it flips the magnet. Attraction becomes repulsion--the way it was meant to be, before Arthur drew Excalibur.

Right now Necromon and his crappy little dimension's being shoved right back where it came from.



Wield a magic item, you start to become it.

Today?

We put the sword back in the stone.



Nooooo!



This is so f%\$@# up.

Doctor Strange died, pal. Things are lot f%\$@# than you think. Stuff like this--it's happening all over.

We'll check in with the Avengers. See what we can do.

Meanwhile, you're stuck like...this?

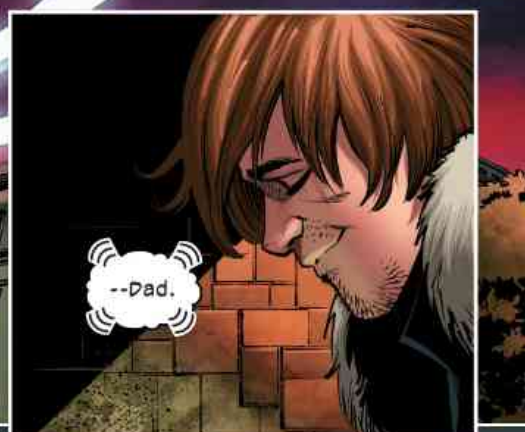


Tell Cyclops... them him global efforts are underway. I--I can see it.

Tell them all if things don't work out? Hell, it won't matter who Excalibur's stickin' out of. Everything dies.

Tell 'em that.









NEXT:

Death of Doctor Strange #4



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